

STATEMENT OF STEVEN GARFINKEL  
DIRECTOR, INFORMATION SECURITY OVERSIGHT OFFICE  
BEFORE THE  
SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

OCTOBER 30, 1985

MR. CHAIRMAN, MR. VICE CHAIRMAN, AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE,

I AM HONORED TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TODAY TO COMMENT UPON THE CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF THE INFORMATION SECURITY OVERSIGHT OFFICE, OR ISOO, IN THE AREA OF INFORMATION SECURITY INITIATIVES. ISOO IS RESPONSIBLE TO THE PRESIDENT UNDER EXECUTIVE ORDER 12356, "NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION," FOR OVERSEEING THE GOVERNMENT-WIDE INFORMATION SECURITY SYSTEM. ISOO IS AN ADMINISTRATIVE COMPONENT OF THE UNITED STATES GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION, BUT RECEIVES ITS PROGRAM AND POLICY DIRECTION FROM THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL. THE ADMINISTRATOR OF GENERAL SERVICES APPOINTS THE ISOO DIRECTOR UPON RECEIVING APPROVAL OF THE APPOINTMENT FROM THE PRESIDENT. I HAVE SERVED AS ISOO DIRECTOR SINCE MAY 1980.

BEFORE I ADDRESS OUR CURRENT INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE IT, I WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS BRIEFLY THE OVERALL HEALTH OF THE INFORMATION SECURITY SYSTEM. UNLIKE THE CRITICAL REVIEWS THAT ARE THE STANDARD FARE OF THE NATIONAL MEDIA, ESPECIALLY IN THE AFTERMATH OF SOME HIGHLY PUBLICIZED ESPIONAGE CASES, THE SECURITY CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM IS GENERALLY IN EXCELLENT HEALTH. THE DIRE PREDICTIONS OF CRITICS THAT ACCOMPANIED THE ISSUANCE OF E.O. 12356 HAVE FAILED TO MATERIALIZE. TO THE CONTRARY, THE REVISED

SYSTEM HAS WITNESSED MANY OUTSTANDING SUCCESSES. FOR EXAMPLE, WE EXPERIENCED ALMOST 400,000 FEWER ORIGINAL CLASSIFICATION ACTIONS IN THE TWO YEARS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING E.O. 12356'S ISSUANCE THAN IN THE TWO YEARS IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING IT. MORE THAN THREE TIMES AS MANY ORIGINAL CLASSIFICATION DECISIONS ARE BEING MARKED FOR AUTOMATIC DECLASSIFICATION UPON A SPECIFIC DATE OR EVENT THAN UNDER THE PRIOR SYSTEM. REQUESTS FOR DECLASSIFICATION REVIEW ARE RESULTING IN UNPRECEDENTED NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES OF DOCUMENTS BEING MADE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC INSPECTION. AND THE NUMBER OF ORIGINAL CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITIES HAS CONTINUED TO FALL, DROPPING TO 6,900 IN FY 1984, THE LOWEST NUMBER WE'VE EVER RECORDED. IN ACCOUNTING FOR THE GENERAL HEALTH OF THE SYSTEM, I WISH TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS COMMITTEE DURING THE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF E.O. 12356. LARGELY ALONE AMONG THE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS WITH WHOM THE ADMINISTRATION CONSULTED, THIS COMMITTEE SHUNNED POLITICAL GRANDSTANDING OVER ITS PROSPECTIVE PROVISIONS AND OPTED INSTEAD FOR CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE AND CRITICISM. WE CONTINUE TO BENEFIT FROM ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SYSTEM.

NOTWITHSTANDING THESE SUCCESSES, THE ADMINISTRATION RECOGNIZED THAT THERE WAS MUCH ROOM FOR CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT EVEN BEFORE THE WALKER CASE BROUGHT THE SECURITY CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM TO THE FRONT PAGES. IN ISOO'S REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR FY 1984, WE HIGHLIGHTED PROBLEM AREAS SUCH AS THE PROLIFERATION OF SECURITY CLEARANCES, THE EROSION OF "NEED-TO-KNOW", THE WIDESPREAD OVERDISTRIBUTION OF CLASSIFIED INFORMATION, AND THE

CONSTANT THREAT TO THE CREDIBILITY OF THE SYSTEM CAUSED BY OVERCLASSIFICATION. THE PUBLICITY OVER THE WALKER AFFAIR CREATED A MORE HOSPITABLE ENVIRONMENT FOR ATTACKING THESE AND OTHER PROBLEMS.

IN JULY OF THIS YEAR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL ENDORSED ISOO'S REQUEST TO COMMENCE AN INTERAGENCY REVIEW OF THE INFORMATION SECURITY SYSTEM. ON JULY 30, I CONVENED A MEETING OF REPRESENTATIVES OF ELEVEN AGENCIES HEAVILY INVOLVED IN THE SECURITY CLASSIFICATION PROGRAM. THESE INCLUDED THE DEPARTMENTS OF STATE, TREASURY, JUSTICE, DEFENSE, ARMY, NAVY, AIR FORCE AND ENERGY, THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, THE NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY AND THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION. AT THAT MEETING WE FORMED FIVE TASK FORCES, EACH CONSISTING OF AT LEAST ONE CIVILIAN AND ONE DEFENSE AGENCY, TO RECOMMEND INITIATIVES IN FIVE AREAS: OVERCLASSIFICATION; OVERDISTRIBUTION OF CLASSIFIED INFORMATION; CLASSIFICATION MANAGEMENT; REVITALIZATION OF THE "NEED-TO-KNOW" PRINCIPLE; AND UNAUTHORIZED DISCLOSURES. HOLDING TO A VERY TIGHT SCHEDULE, THE TASK FORCES COMPLETED THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS. LAST THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, I RECONVENED THE AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES. AT THAT MEETING WE REACHED A STRONG CONSENSUS ON THOSE INITIATIVES THAT I WILL RECOMMEND TO THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS. I ANTICIPATE THE SUBMISSION OF THOSE RECOMMENDATIONS BEFORE I AM SCHEDULED TO REAPPEAR BEFORE THIS COMMITTEE ON NOVEMBER 20. AT THAT TIME I HOPE TO COMMENT ON THOSE RECOMMENDED INITIATIVES IN GREATER DETAIL IN ORDER TO SOLICIT THE INPUT OF THE COMMITTEE.